



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCCCX.

JANUARY, 1891.

THE FUTURE OF THE INDIAN QUESTION.

BY GENERAL NELSON A. MILES, U. S. A.

I HAVE been requested to give an explanation of the threatened Indian outbreak, in view of the popular belief that the Indians had been so far subjugated and reduced in numbers that an uprising was no longer considered serious. An account is also desired of the present situation, and I am asked the extent to which the Indians are a source of danger, even though the present troubles are averted, who is to blame for the outbreak, and how peace can be assured for the future.

The questions are quite comprehensive. In reply I would say that it is a misfortune that the people of many sections are so little acquainted with the inhabitants, character, resources, and necessities of this country, which constitutes one great nation. Circumstances have given the people of the West better opportunities of observing it in its entirety.

Again, it is somewhat surprising to notice how little interest the people of the great Mississippi valley take in the local affairs of the Pacific or Atlantic States. Frequently the press and public men have announced that we have no necessity for a navy to protect our commerce; that we have no need of modern coast-defences and improved artillery to protect our twenty-seven ports of entry and five billions of property scattered along the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts; that as far as foreign complications and foreign wars are concerned we have suddenly reached "the

millennium," when arbitration (which is a most excellent measure to rely upon when both parties are afraid) is to determine all questions of international controversy. On the other hand, the people living in the densely-populated regions of the Atlantic States have formed the impression, in which perhaps the hope or desire is father to the thought, that after two hundred years of Indian warfare we have reached the end of all serious controversy between the Indians and the white race.

The fact that we have had a few years of peace is no guarantee that it will continue. Within the last sixteen years we have had no less than nine Indian wars, and now we find ourselves threatened with a more serious and general uprising than any that has occurred during the whole history of Indian warfare. The confederation of the "Six Nations" by the prophet, the campaigns of Tecumseh, and the conspiracy of Pontiac did not extend over so vast an area of country or embrace so many different tribes, many of whom have been hostile to each other, as the present conspiracy; and while the conditions are somewhat similar to those which have preceded other Indian confederations, conspiracies, and wars, this one has unusual features and causes.

The Indians are practically a doomed race, and none realize it better than themselves. They have contended inch by inch for every foot of territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The strength, superior intelligence, and ingenuity of the white race in the construction of weapons of war, and their vast superiority in numbers, have not deterred the Indians from resisting the power of the whites and beginning hostilities, sometimes even with apparently little justification, cause, or hope of success; and there would be nothing remarkable in the history of such a warlike people if they made one desperate effort in the death-struggle of the race.

The subjugation of a race by their enemies cannot but create feelings of most intense hatred and animosity. Possibly if we should put ourselves in their place, we might comprehend their feelings. Suppose, for instance, that, instead of being a nation of vast wealth, population, prosperity, and happiness, our numbers were narrowed down to two hundred and fifty thousand souls, scattered in bands, villages, or settlements of from five hundred to twenty thousand people, and confined within the limits of comparatively small districts. Suppose this vast continent had been overrun by sixty millions of people from Africa, India, or China,

claiming that their civilization, customs, and beliefs were older and better than ours, compelling us to adopt their habits, language, and religion, obliging us to wear the same style of raiment, cut our hair according to their fashion, live upon the same food, sing the same songs, worship the same Allahs, Vishnus, and Brahmas; and we realized that such a conquest and the presence of such a horde of enemies had become a withering blight and a destroying scourge to our race: what then would be our feelings towards such a people? In considering this question we may be able to realize something of the feelings of the Indians of to-day. They remember the romance of the freedom and independence they once enjoyed; the time when they could move from one pleasant valley to another; when they had all that an Indian desires, namely, plenty of food, comfortable lodges made of skins of the buffalo or elk, plenty of their kind of clothing; and when they were allowed to enjoy their customs, rites, and amusements, savage and brutal as they were.

The first time the writer met Sitting Bull was under a flag of truce between the lines, when he had a thousand warriors behind him; and during the conversation I think he expressed in a few words the true sentiment of the Indian. He was what might be considered a devotional man, frequently offering a little prayer and saluting the Great Spirit. One remark of his is certainly significant. Raising his eyes toward heaven, he said: "God Almighty made me an Indian, and he did not make me an agency Indian, and I do not intend to be one." That remark was indorsed by huge grunts of the stalwart savages within hearing, and it is the sentiment of the non-treaty, disaffected Indians of every tribe in every section of the great West. They prefer to be Indians in their wild and independent life rather than to be confined to the limits of any agency.

While we have continued the policy of using the military force of the government against them with all severity, as soon as that is completed and the tribes are subjugated, they are suddenly turned over to civilians, some from the far-off Eastern States, to try various experiments and to carry out the theories that they have of civilization. Take, for instance, the Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Comanches of the Indian Territory. Their history has been a history of peace and war for many years. In 1874 they had a great convention or medicine-dance, which resulted in a

general uprising, in which they became a terror to the whole southwest country. After committing many crimes and after many engagements with the troops, they were finally worn down and subjugated, and surrendered with scarcely any means of continuing hostilities. Most of the few remaining war ponies they had were sold; they gave up their pale and emaciated white captives, who in turn passed down the line of warriors and pointed out not less than seventy Comanches who had committed horrible atrocities during the eight months of hostility. These seventy warriors were sent to Florida for punishment, and the military control of the tribes was withdrawn. Within a few years the warriors were returned to the Indian Territory, and in nine years from that time the same Indians were rearmed and remounted, in better condition for war than before, and ripe for an outbreak. The commanding general of the army and the department commander were sent to the Indian Territory, and nearly one-fourth of the army was concentrated in that department to prevent a serious outbreak, endangering the peace of Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, by the same Indians who are now in a threatening condition.

Again, take the Sioux nation that committed the terrible massacre of '62 in Minnesota, in which it was authoritatively stated that one thousand lives were lost, and a very large military force was employed to bring them under control. Thirty of the principal leaders were tried and hanged, but yet that experience did not deter others of the same Indians from engaging in the subsequent wars of the Sioux nation. In 1867 the Sioux were again in a condition of hostility, and the Fetterman massacre occurred, the Indians being led by the same man (Red Cloud) who is said recently to have been instrumental in causing dissatisfaction among the different tribes. Treaties were made with them in 1869, but in 1876 they were again openly hostile, spreading terror over a vast section of country, embracing a portion of the two Dakotas, Montana, northern Nebraska, and a part of Wyoming. The massacre on the Little Big Horn followed in 1876, in which two hundred and sixty officers and soldiers under General Custer perished. After two seasons of campaigning against them by the United States troops, during the winter of 1875 and the summer of 1876, and the terribly severe winter campaign of 1876 and 1877, upwards of five thousand agreed to surrender, and nine of

their principal men gave themselves as hostages that the tribes would surrender on the Yellowstone or at the different agencies ; which they did with the exception of two bands under the leadership of *Lame Deer* and *Sitting Bull*. The former was killed in the following May, and the latter driven to Canada and kept north of the boundary for three years, until he and his followers finally surrendered between 1877 and 1881.

For four years from 1877 to 1881 they were under military control, and many of them were made self-sustaining. They were disarmed and dismounted, their war ponies were sold and the proceeds returned to them in domestic stock, and in a few years they had a large herd of cattle, and wagons and cultivated fields. In 1881 they were ordered to be sent down the Yellowstone and Missouri to the southern agencies, and although they implored the different officers to write or telegraph to the authorities in Washington to leave them where their crops were developing in the fields, they were loaded on five large steamboats and shipped down the river, and turned over to the Indian agent at Standing Rock Agency.

Many of these same Indians are now in a condition of threatening hostility. Within the short space of ten years we find the condition of the Cheyennes and Sioux Indians to be as follows : The fine herd of cattle belonging to the Cheyennes has disappeared. They claim that it has been partly taken by the whites, and that they were obliged to use the remainder for food. They claim that it was almost impossible for them to obtain food without committing depredations, and they stated in the presence of the commission recently visiting them that they were "compelled to eat their dogs in order to sustain life." The fact that they have not received sufficient food is admitted by the agents and the officers of the government who have had opportunities of knowing, and their condition is again as threatening as at any time when they have not been in hostility.

The Sioux Indians during that time were under the charge of civil agents, who have been frequently changed and often inexperienced. Many of the tribes have become rearmed and remounted, and have assumed a threatening attitude. They claim that the government has not fulfilled its treaties and has failed to make large enough appropriations for their support ; they also claim that they have suffered for want of food, and the evidence

of this is beyond question and sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced, intelligent mind. The statements of the officers, inspectors both of the military and the Interior Department, of agents, of missionaries and civilians familiar with their condition, leave no room for reasonable doubt that this is one of the principal causes of the present disturbance. While statements may be made as to the amount of money that has been expended by the government to feed the different tribes, and while there is no intention of questioning the honesty of all concerned, the manner of distributing those appropriations will furnish one reason for the deficit.

Another cause is the unfortunate failure of the crops in the plains country during the last two years. It has been almost impossible for the Indians to raise anything from the ground for self-support; in fact, white settlers have been very unfortunate and their losses have been serious and universal through a large section of that country. They have struggled on from year to year; occasionally they would raise good crops of corn, which they were compelled to sell for from fourteen to twenty cents per bushel, while in the season of drought their labor was almost entirely lost. So serious have been their misfortunes that many hundreds have left the country within the last few years, passing over the mountains to the Pacific slope or returning to the east banks of the Missouri and the Mississippi.

The Indian, however, cannot migrate from one part of the United States to another; neither can he obtain employment as readily as white people, either upon or beyond the Indian reservations. He must remain in comparative idleness and accept the results of the drought. This creates a feeling of discontent, even among the loyal and well-disposed, while there is quite a large element that is hostile and opposed to every process of civilization.

In this condition of affairs the Indians realize the inevitable, and as they see their numbers gradually diminishing, their strength and power gone, they pray to their God for some supernatural help to aid them in the restoration of their former independence, and for the destruction of their enemies. At this stage emissaries from a certain religious sect or people living on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains came among them announcing that the real messiah had appeared; and in order to convince themselves, delegations of Sioux, Cheyennes, and other tribes left their reservations a year ago last November, travelling through the Arapahoe

and Shoshone reservations in Wyoming, and thence via the Union Pacific they passed into Utah, and were joined by others, Ban-nocks and Pi-Utes, until they came to a large conclave of whites and Indians in Nevada. They were there told that those present were all believers in this new religion, that they were all an oppressed people, that the whites and Indians there were all the same, and that the messiah had returned to them.

So well was this deception played by men masquerading and personating the Christ that they made these superstitious savages believe that all who had faith in this "new religion" would occupy the earth, and all who did not would be destroyed; and they were told that which is most precious to the Indian heart, that the spirits of their departed relatives would be resurrected, and that after the whites were destroyed they would come back driving vast herds of buffaloes and wild horses. They there met the representatives of fourteen tribes of Indians, and after several months they returned to the various tribes and announced what they had seen and heard, fully convinced that what had been told them was true. But in order to gratify the savage nature of the warlike Sioux they agreed that *acts* would be necessary to appease or hasten the coming of the messiah; that they must help remove the whites and thereby show their faith by their works.

To the disaffected, turbulent, hostile spirit of such men as Sitting Bull and others this was like a revelation; nothing could be more gratifying; and the false prophets and medicine-men immediately took advantage of the condition of the Indians to proclaim this doctrine and spread disaffection among the different tribes.

In early life Sitting Bull gained his reputation as a warrior by incessantly organizing and leading raiding parties and by his perpetual hostility to the white race. Few Indians have appeared on this continent who have been more successful in organizing and drawing to them large bodies of the discontented of their people. Emissaries travelled in various directions, not alone from his tribe, but more especially from the Shoshones and Arapahoes, who have been to some extent peaceable for many years, going to the different tribes and endeavoring to persuade them to this belief. Emissaries from Sitting Bull carried the tidings to the different tribes to get all the arms and ammunition possible, and meet all the warriors near the Black Hills in the spring. They visited the band of Sioux Indians north of the British boundary, and sym-

pathy and promises of support were returned. The first sign of disturbance was to be the signal for the gathering of the warriors.

During the last few years of peace, and while there was apparently no danger of immediate outbreak, the Indians have been getting a large amount of ammunition and arms. The Indian's instinct is always to obtain some weapon of warfare or defence, and if he cannot obtain a rifle, he will get a knife or a bow and arrow. His favorite weapon, and one he has been most desirous of obtaining, is the long-range Winchester rifle, which is a rifle of the most effective kind.

The theory that a few lines of railway and the disappearance of the vast herds of buffaloes have made it impracticable for Indians to go to war is erroneous. They are in a better condition for war at present than ever before; they can live upon domestic stock, and there is abundance of it scattered over the plains country and much of the mountain country; and the numerous horse-ranches would furnish them a remount in nearly every valley. The Nez Percés, Bannocks, and Apaches in their recent wars lived and moved entirely upon the stock of white settlers. The area over which they could roam is the country west of the Missouri River between the Canadian boundary and the Rio Grande. It contains a very sparse population that has been struggling to plant homes.

Another reason of encouragement to the Indians to assume hostilities, and one of which their false prophets take advantage in influencing their followers, is the misfortunes that have occurred to the white people in the plains country during the last few years. Three years ago a very large percentage of the domestic stock was destroyed by the intensely cold winter of 1887, and the losses were ruinous to thousands of white settlers and ranchmen. The drought during the last two years has been very serious, and has caused many of the poor settlers who have been struggling for years to support themselves and their families to leave that country in pursuit of better fields west of the Rocky Mountains or east of the Missouri. This, the false prophets claim, is an indication that the Great Spirit is angry with the white people for destroying their buffaloes (cattle) and causing them to leave the country, and that in time their buffaloes will return, as well as their dead relatives.

While the Indians have been in this disaffected condition and rearming and remounting, the little army that is the only safe-

guard between the unprotected settlers and the savage hordes has been employed in other fields, and its supplies and equipments have been seriously curtailed. Congress has fixed the limit of the enlisted men in the army, the number of employees, the number of horses and the number of mules, and the limit is what might be required in time of peace rather than what is actually required in serious warfare. Congress, however, has not limited Indian wars. This necessarily causes much embarrassment to the United States troops ; yet it has been the experience of the army of the United States to cope with the large number of savage tribes, experiencing all the dangers and hardships of a war in which no quarter is expected, and every officer and soldier who enters an Indian campaign realizes that, unless he achieves success, naught awaits him but torture or death.

No one who has not experienced it can comprehend or appreciate the fortitude, hardships, and sacrifices displayed and endured by our army in its years of experience in Indian warfare ; frequently in the wildest and most rugged sections of country, amid cañons, mountains, and lava-beds, under the tropical heats of the south or in the Arctic blizzards of the extreme north ; yet year after year it discharges whatever service is required of it with most commendable fidelity.

You ask me who is responsible for this condition of affairs. The answer is both the whites and the Indians.

First—Those white men who have compelled the Indians to live upon limited tracts of land and allowed them to get into the condition in which we now find them, dissatisfied and equipped for war.

Second—Another class of whites are those who have committed the great crime of instilling into the minds of these superstitious and vicious savages the delusion that they have a messiah among them, and that the white people who do not believe it will be destroyed by some supernatural power : it matters not whether the Indians have been incited by this class of white people in actual words to open hostilities or not ; the deceptions that have been practised upon them have aroused their warlike natures until they are in a condition for devastation, plunder, ravage, and all the horrors that savage fiends can inflict upon defenceless and unprotected people.

Third—Another class of people who are responsible are the

white men who have made merchandise of the welfare and safety of their own people; in other words, those who have sold thousands of improved magazine long-range rifles and tons of ammunition to savages, which alone enable them to devastate the country. Those Indians could manufacture neither a rifle, a cartridge, nor a knife; yet they are better armed and better supplied with ammunition to-day than at any time in their history.

Fourth—Those who are to blame for this threatened danger are the Indians themselves; and Halleck's description of Red Jacket is not a bad illustration of the Indian's double character. While they have wrongs and grievances that have been fully enumerated, at the same time they have friends anxious to protect their interests; but, notwithstanding this, they would in justification of some real or imaginary wrong, or prompted by some wild, savage religious frenzy, ravage a country and brain the innocent prattling babe with fiendish delight as readily as they would meet a stalwart foe.

If you ask for the remedy that will prevent the possibility of such a condition of affairs in the future, I would say that I have not changed the opinion formed and stated in an article in this REVIEW thirteen years ago. After careful observation of all the principal tribes in the United States, I believe that those people who have been and are still a terror to the peace and good order of certain States and territories should be placed under some government just and strong enough to control them. The time has arrived when the lives, welfare, prosperity, and future of those great States are too precious and too valuable to be jeopardized by these yearly alarms and frequent Indian wars. While thousands of people have fled from their little homes, and abandoned most of their property, to seek shelter and refuge in any place where it could be obtained, and while thousands of resolute and intrepid officers and soldiers are enduring the severity of a Dakota winter to hold in restraint these tribes of turbulent savages, it is hoped that some conclusion will be reached by the government to permanently end the present state of affairs. The subject is too serious for selfishness, acrimony, or partisanship. It requires judicious, humane, and patriotic treatment.

NELSON A. MILES.